

Journal of the House

ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY
of the
STATE OF MISSOURI

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

FIRST DAY, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2025

ADDRESS BY SPEAKER JONATHAN PATTERSON

Mr. Secretary, Madam Speaker, distinguished guests, Members of the House of Representatives,

Our constitution instructs us to meet at this date and at this hour, but it is our constituents, our neighbors, our fellow Missourians, who call us here today to once again renew our democracy.

And so we begin the work of the 103rd general assembly. It is my great honor to welcome all of you here today to this great hall, a place that some have called the front porch of our democracy.

I wish to thank my colleagues for this high honor of being named your speaker. I am truly humbled by your trust in me and I will work every day to be worthy of that trust.

Every Speaker of the House is unique from the one before. For example, I am the first Speaker from Jackson County in 157 years. I am the first medical doctor to serve as Speaker in 140 years. And I am the first Asian American Speaker in Missouri history. But here, in this body, our uniqueness is forgotten. On this floor, we lose our names.

Here, I am the gentleman from Jackson. This is not a place for egos. We leave egos to those on the other side of the rotunda.

Losing our names is a timeless reminder that our names are unimportant. It is the people we represent that matter most and the areas we represent that supersede us. Long after we are gone and but a picture on a wall, the gentleman or lady from Jackson will still rise on this floor.

Being elected state representative is a truly special honor. And none of us in here did this alone. We are here today because of the love and support of our families. While we are getting the attention and accolades, they are often the ones behind the scenes doing the thankless work while we are here in Jefferson City. Like all of you, I am deeply indebted to my family, who are here today. My wife, Jennifer, and our kids, Leah and Andrew, and I ask that you make them feel welcome. Guys, it's been a crazy 6 years and I couldn't have done it without you and I wouldn't want to be here without you.

I'm also joined here today by my 5 siblings, Greg, Lori, Lindsey, Jenny, Jeff, and all of their spouses, and I ask that they stand and I ask the members to welcome them. Between the 6 of us kids, I'm proud to say there are 19 children, all of them the grandkids of my parents, Joe and Elaine of Blue Springs, and I ask that we all make them feel welcome.

My parents are the embodiment of the promise of Missouri and they are a good reminder of what we need to be doing here for the next 4 months.

Both of my parents were born and raised in the state just to the west, and they went to school there. But it was Missouri where they chose to make their life together. After my dad's time in the air force, they

moved to Blue Springs, where he had a good job with a great Missouri company, Hallmark Cards. In a Missouri town they found safe neighborhoods, good public schools for their kids, and a community of people who shared their values.

They chose to make their kids their priority. With the hundreds of soccer, basketball, and volleyball games, choir and piano lessons and recitals, there really wasn't much time for anything else. But their family is what they valued most. And in the end, they were able to realize their dream of sending all of their kids to college. One to Westminster college, three to William Jewell, and two to a little place called Mizzou.

My friends, if you have any questions about what we should be doing here in Jefferson City, I submit to you that there is no greater pursuit for us than making sure that every family in Missouri has the opportunities that Missouri had for Joe and Elaine. That families want to move to Missouri and live out their dreams here, just as my parents did.

So let us commit today to each other that we here in the House are here to serve Missouri families and that we will put Missouri Families first.

For Missouri families, there can be no greater gift than the gift of life. That means, while we respect the will of the voters, we must clarify the provisions of Amendment 3 and make Missouri the most pro-life state it can be.

The last general assembly left unfinished business on the table. Legislation that would have mandated the state apply for the benefits of foster children with deceased parents should have been passed but fell victim to our inaction and politics. We must prioritize the most vulnerable among us, especially our foster children. Therefore, I will refer that same legislation to the committee next week and I ask that it be first bill sent to the senate for their consideration.

Mental health continues to be a problem afflicting our youth. It is an issue that is seemingly getting worse and worse every year. The general assembly has recently invested in pediatric mental health with a 25 million dollar investment in the Illuminate Initiative at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. We must continue to invest in treatment for pediatric mental health and I ask that the House budget committee once again make appropriations for mental health treatment for our kids.

Today, too many Missouri families are being torn apart by violence and crime. Nothing is more harmful to the growth of our state than criminals who roam our streets with little fear of punishment. Therefore, we must pass legislation that addresses the critical issue of public safety. I hope legislation that seeks to recruit and retain police officers to our cities will be supported by members on both sides of the aisle.

Finally, Missouri's families continue to be burdened with trying to find childcare spots that are too hard to find and too expensive. This is something I personally heard time and time again from constituents as I visited with them this past summer. The lack of affordable and accessible childcare causes billions of dollars of losses and around \$5,500 per working parent each year. I ask that the House once again take up and pass legislation that will provide incentives to businesses and childcare facilities to increase the number of childcare slots available to Missouri parents.

When the history of the 103rd general assembly is written, what will they say about us? Will we be remembered for our accomplishments and all that we did to make Missouri better? Or will we be remembered as a group who was too preoccupied with politics and Facebook videos to do any serious work.

As your speaker, I ask you to join me today and commit to working together to make life safer, better, and more affordable for Missouri families. When we have our differences, let us argue with respect. And when we find common goals let us pursue them with the energy and passion fitting the people we serve. Let's get to work for Missouri families.

My congratulations to you all and your families on your elections. It is truly a special honor to play a part

in the story of our state as state representative.

May God bless you. May God bless the work we will do together. And may God continue to shine his light on the show me state.